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COETZEE'S ECOLOGY arises in relation to one of the most troubling suggestions in the fiction of his later career. Already in *Disgrace* (1999), but still more starkly and disturbingly in *Elizabeth Costello* (2002), the modern human community associates itself with a normalization of atrocity; indeed, atrocity seems to situate itself at the very core of the modern. Coetzee's writing registers and then counters this atrocious modernity by opening and extending the ethical bounds of human community, by envisioning animals as fellow beings deserving the consideration and protection that more typically are accorded only to the human being. This extension of entitlement, however, necessarily impugns the typical economy of modern human collectives. As novelist Elizabeth Costello observes to a gathering of academics, her tour of their American college town has included "no horrors, no drug-testing laboratories, no factory farms, no abattoirs. Yet I am sure they are here.... They are all around us as I speak" (Coetzee, Elizabeth 65). In denouncing these unacknowledged but omnipresent horrors, Elizabeth voices a deep questioning of how we moderns understand ourselves and our relationships with other living beings. To expand the sphere of our community beyond the bounds of the human, Coetzee must adopt a broader sense of the interactions and interdependencies that impact upon and give shape to human lives; he must also expand his delineation of the sphere of human responsibility. Ecological understanding and imagination are required. Ecology, the "study of relationships, energy transfers, mutualities, connections and cause-and-effect networks within natural systems" (Snyder 75), does not dispense with social and political sciences, though it does contextualize them and qualifies their claims to status as autonomous realms of knowledge and enquiry. Coetzee's imagination, as represented in the later development of *Disgrace* and throughout *Elizabeth Costello*, works to discern the relationships human beings establish with the non-human world and to understand and evaluate humanity in terms of these relationships. Animal being—the living presence of the animal, in our world and in ourselves—is a concern that haunts the writing, at times asserting itself as a focal topic, at times abiding as a shadowy but inescapable presence. Intensified focus on the animal enables Coetzee to write in a zone of intersection between sociopolitical and ecological concerns, to elaborate an ecologically oriented ethics that sharpens the critique of modern political regimes that dominate and exploit fellow beings both human and non-human. By conjoining attention to animal being with analysis of the more conventionally defined social and political zones of human experience, Coetzee effectively denounces, as Graham Huggan suggests, "the dominance of instrumental reason as a means of justifying authoritarian behavior ... both within and beyond the (human) species" (720). Coetzee also tacitly acknowledges that modern animal fables have been used, even quite recently, "to prop up the social hierarchies and disciplinary regimes that legitimize imperial rule" (Huggan 714). His new kind of animal-inhabited fiction recognizes that the animal is a primordial presence in the structuring of human politics and, more crucially, that animality marks the point of our most intense participation in an expansive, much-more-than-human world of living beings. The relationships we establish with

animals, imaginatively and materially, manifest the degree to which we have understood, or failed to understand, our participation and the responsibilities this participation entails. When such understanding fails most entirely, what ensues is atrocity—the distressingly insistent element of the Coetzee text. Like David Lurie of *Disgrace*, Elizabeth Costello recognizes atrocious aspects of some human-to-human relations as well as being aware of the atrocious treatment of animals by humans.

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